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THE LIFE STORY
of
EAMON DE VALERA

By
SEÁN Ó FAOLÁIN

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED
DUBLIN AND CORK

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PROLOGUE.

TALL as a spear, commanding, enigmatic, his eyes so dark and deep that it is difficult to see their expression, his face deeply lined as with many cares, the face of a thoughtful man, but a face that reveals little—a good face for a politician—a voice that nobody could call soft or rich, for it is rather like the harsh beat of a muffled bell, tight lips, hands that gesture but little, with long slender bony fingers that might as well be the fingers of a musician as a soldier,—this is the first impression one gets of Eamon de Valera, President *de jure* of the Irish people, President *de facto* of the Irish Free State. But as he begins to talk those dark eyes do not so much flash as seem to burn in their sockets, and the long fingers close within the fist until they strain the white skin of the knuckles—one thinks of Parnell's sapphire ring, which in his rage he used bury in the flesh of his fingers—and the voice, though still ringing as with a muffled clapper, rises and carries clear and distinct, hard, metallic, like platinum. Yet, somehow or other, one never seems to be able to penetrate behind the brown mask of his lined features, and, as was also true of the last great leader of the Irish race before him, Charles Stewart Parnell, he eludes you and you leave him with his secret, as unsolved a riddle as the Sphinx. It is in the hope of being able to see something of the humanity that lies

beneath the mask that I have undertaken to write this Life. Seventeen years ago no man could have attempted it. De Valera was then almost unknown, staring out of those dark excited pupils down the glinting barrel of a rifle behind a sandbag in Bolands' Mills, cannonading thundering in the distance, rifle shots cracking at his elbow, the lurid glow of Dublin in flames lighting his sallow cheeks. Fourteen years ago, when he was, prophetically, elected first President of Dáil Eireann, he had not as yet revealed himself. He was to the majority of Irishmen a figurehead, a name, soon to become a legend. In the Terror of 1921 no Irishman could have hoped to do justice to a man whose name was on everybody's lips, who had returned from a triumphant tour of the United States, who stood as the acknowledged leader of his race. One remembers the ballads the children sang about him.

*"Up De Valera, you're the champion of the
right,
We'll follow you to battle 'neath the orange,
green and white,
And when next we meet the Sassenach, we'll
beat him,
Oh, we'll beat him in the fight—
And make De Valera King of Ireland!"*

Who could hope to write impartially of such a man? The horror of the Civil War followed, and one thought sadly of Browning's

"'Twas roses, roses all the way."

He was the best loved and best hated man in Ireland. As the bitternesses and partialities of those years passed away one might have hoped to study with some chance of success this tenacious fighter, but who would have wished to paint what then seemed a thwarted and defeated life, a life of long labour and tireless sacrifice that seemed doomed to be dogged by failure and shattered hopes? Now, however, it is clear that President De Valera has definitely arrived at the end of one period of his life (which may be the crowning period of his whole career), and from this vantage point it is possible to look back over those fifty odd years, almost wholly devoted to the service of his country; it is possible to survey the road over which this stormy petrel, this Fiery Cross of Irish politics in the twentieth century, has led his people; it is possible to survey his work in one complete section, to tell the amazing story of his life, not of course as yet as a finished thing, but as a fully rounded story, with all its dramatic crises, all its tense excitement, its hopes and fears and dangers, crowned by this extraordinary climax, which, like the conclusion of one cycle of a play, is being even now enacted before our eyes, the ending of one great story, the prelude, one fervently hopes, "as harbingers preceding still the fates," to an even greater, if less exciting one.

PART I.
EARLY YEARS TO 1916.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

OUT of what matrix has this man come, out of what rock—for no other image is possible—was he hewn?

*“Turbulent and haughty, proud and keen, as
Spanish steel.”*

It is important to know this, for has not one of the wisest of Irish poets, A.E. said that the hour of childhood is “thronged with fate”?

*“All the strong powers of Dante were bowed
To a child's mild eyes,
That wrought within him that travail
From depths up to the skies,
Inferno, Purgatorio,
And Paradise.”*

Fittingly, when one recalls the course of Irish history, he was born of a Spanish father and an Irish-American mother, born under the shadows of those New York mammoth spires that have outdone all the fabled towers of Babylon and the plains of Chaldea. The fire of Spain and the warmth of Ireland were spilled into his blood,

and in his childish mind ancient memories of Spanish galleons sailing across Biscay to the help of Dark Rosaleen may well have lain smouldering like a seed of fire that can be blown, by any chance breath of wind, into a raging flame. His father, Vivian de Valera, said to have been a political refugee, was a Spanish doctor, and his mother, Katherine Coll, was an Irish emigrant from the soft, green hills of Bruree in County Limerick. His son, Vivian, now following his distinguished father's footsteps in the National University, was named after Dr. De Valera. The doctor died, however, when Edward was a little infant of two, and shortly after Mrs. De Valera (later Mrs. Wheelwright) sent the child home to her brother, a small farmer, who, oblivious of the great future before this little child of three, reared him in the kindly, hospitable atmosphere of the fields of Bruree.

In after years it was natural that he should take pride in that Spanish ancestry, when his reading in Irish history told him how closely the two nations were knit in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, how much of Irish memories is buried to-day in Salamanca and Valladolid and out to Simancas. Remember the date of his birth—October 13, 1882. Parnell was at the height of his power, fighting doggedly in the House of Commons, hissing out his contempt for "*your Queen and your Government,*" while, as Cunningham Graham tells us, the Tories

in their seats opposite "reared on seed-cake and lemonade, boiled with rage." (How strange that within a little over thirty years, and yet not so strange for all that, this young child playing under the shadows of the skyscrapers should, with a rifle kicking at his shoulder in a Dublin mill, blow into contemptuous forgetfulness that gallant story of Westminster!) When he was three years old the Home Rule Bill of 1886 was defeated, and with it hopes of Irish freedom were dissipated for two generations. So that young De Valera was destined to grow up in Ireland during one of its worst periods from the national point of view, and it is a testimony to the independence of his mind that he did not become a pure West Briton in the dead doldrums of that most miserable period of Irish politics in which he grew to boyhood, a period when the personal rancours of the Healy-O'Brien-Dillon squabbles so enervated and befuddled Irish nationalist thought that enough money could not be raised to erect a monument to Wolfe Tone for the Ninety-Eight centenary! Young De Valera was then sixteen. He had been given a primary education in the gentle valley of the Maigue at the Bruree National School, and later with the Christian Brothers in Rath Luirc, a quiet town set in a pastoral country, where, it may be, the ghosts of that famous company of songsters, the Poets of the Maigue, went rollicking at night beneath his window, singing their enigmatical

songs to the Poor Old Woman for whom he was to fight and all but die :—

*“ And are you Venus, or are you Deirdre,
Or are you Helen for whom Troy fell down?
Oh, I am neither, but the Poor Old Woman
Harassed by the Sassenach and abandoned
by my own.”*

Once he interrupted the cold logic of his speeches to tell how he used to read at this time of the Scottish hero Wallace, or, lying on his green hills on a summer's day, turn the pages of the Life of Napoleon. It is the only glimpse we get of the young Irish boy, his mind already ennobled by heroic literature. I once met an old, white-haired Christian Brother who had been in that school when De Valera was a pupil, and he told me how, when on one occasion they were studying the career of Wellington, the boy burst out with, “ But, Brother, have we no Irish generals of our own?” “ I told him,” the old monk said, “ that we had many, and I spoke of Sarsfield, and Sean O'Neill, and Owen Roe, and the O'Donnells, who are buried in Spain. And then,” continued the monk, with a twinkle in his eye, “ in the way boys always prefer a discussion to a lesson, the whole class took it up, but Eamon sat there gripping the desk, all on fire, and I really think it was to him alone I spoke.” But there was nothing of the mooning dreamer about the boy. Several men who were at school with him in Blackrock College, Dublin, where he went from Charleville, tell me

he was rough and hearty at his games, Rugby, cricket and the like, for in those days Blackrock was, just like any other West British institution, indifferent to the aims of the Gaelic Athletic Association, which had been founded in 1884, and which was destined to be one of the most powerful agents in the awakening of a truly national spirit among a people sunk in the morass of apathy after the Parnell debacle, with its miserable aftermath of internecine strife. But when the games were over his large lips would close, his eyes would become clear and thoughtful again, his pugnacious and somewhat aggressive nostrils would relax, his speech would become gracious and his manner courteous, and, as always in later life, even to this day, his whole being inspire respect rather than awaken affection. In that, again, he is like Parnell, and was totally different to Michael Collins. He kept his secret from the beginning.

EARLY MANHOOD.

The rest of his youth and early manhood is the story of a student. He gained a scholarship to the old Royal University in mathematical science, became conversant with Latin, Greek, French and English literature, was conversant with Spanish, spoke Irish fluently, thought of taking up astronomy at seventeen, easily secured his University degree, and became a most successful teacher of mathematics in such colleges as Rockwell, Black-

rock, Maynooth, Belvedere, and Carysfort. "When Dev. taught, mathematics ceased to be mathematics and became a sheer delight?" says one of his pupils. It was the Gaelic League (founded 1893) which first brought him to the national fight. Inspired by such men as Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill, he laboured regularly at the language, and at one stage took charge of the Irish Summer School founded by Casement at Tawin in the West. And as it was the language which led him to the feet of Cathleen ni Houlihan, it was the language which brought him the happiness of marriage: he wedded Sinéad ni Fhlanagain, a Dublin teacher of Irish. There were seven children of that marriage, mainly sons. It was Vivian, the eldest boy, who cried passionately to a party of raiding soldiers during the Trouble, "You can arrest father, but you will never make English of us!" So is the torch handed on.

THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS.

The history of Irish political struggles before the founding of Sinn Fein is the history of the landed men's fight to live. Davitt and the Land League were the backbone of the conflict with England. The Sinn Fein fight began in the cities and remained an urban movement to the end, a movement without any of those social theories which men like Davitt and Ginnell were always propounding. The rumbles of the coming revolution were heard not on the mountain sides, but

in the back streets of Dublin. It was the slums of Dublin, the foul rookeries of the Coombe, the network of tumble-downery about the Broadstone and Inchicore, that threw up the wild and whirling figure of James Larkin, that bred the slow, sullen fire of rage and hate in the heart of James Connolly and that founded the Irish Citizen Army. In a room in Wynn's Hotel one October night in 1913 a score of men, youths and boys, including MacNeill, Pearse, MacDonagh, and The O'Rahilly, founded the Irish Volunteers. De Valera threw himself whole-heartedly into the movement, and quickly rose to the rank of commandant. He had unsheathed his sword for Ireland. He was destined not to sheathe it again while he lived.

After that things began to move quickly.

In the North the keen, saturnine, hatchet face of Edward Carson was leading the Orangemen into open anarchy. "I do not care twopence whether it is treason or not," he shouted at Coleraine in September, 1912. On the night of the 24th of April, 1914, 35,000 rifles were landed for Carson's Army at Larne from the Norwegian steamer *Fanny* out of Hamburg. On Sunday afternoon, July 26th, Erskine Childers and his wife appeared off Howth with a yacht containing 2,500 rifles and 125,000 rounds of ammunition. At midnight of August 4th the Hounds of War began to bellow over Europe. On September 30th Eoin MacNeill and 15,000 men

seceded from the National Volunteers and founded the Sinn Fein or Irish Volunteers. Casement was in Berlin. Giffith's work, begun already before the end of the last century, was bearing fruit at home. In November the Citizen Army was fused with the Irish Volunteers. Sinn Fein propaganda was setting the young men of Ireland aflame. Conscription was mooted for England in 1915. Birrell, the Castle, and Redmond were either paralysed by or unaware of the strength of the new forces. A few days before the Rebellion, Redmond dined with the Rt. Hon. Sir James O'Connor, and, holding out his fist, said contemptuously, "I could crush Sinn Fein in the hollow of that hand." But under the surface the Revolution was coming to a head. On April 12th, 1916, a Dutch trader steamed out of the Elbe into the North Sea. She was packed to the gunwale with arms, and accompanied by a submarine, on board of which was Roger Casement. She never reached Ireland, but, in spite of that, on Easter Monday, 1916, a lovely, silent, springtime day, warm and gentle as the Primavera, Eamon de Valera, saying farewell to his wife and children, in neat grey-green uniform and silver-badged cap, led a hundred men into Bolands' Mills in Ringsend; and at twelve noon, a Republic being proclaimed, with a Provisional Government of seven, the shot was fired which, like that described in Emerson's *Concord Hymn*, was destined to be heard "round the world." This

school teacher with the gaunt frame, the aloof manner, as of an ascetic or a recluse, the sad eyes, which, to one observer at least, had so much of the Dantesque suggestion of "the man who had been in Hell," stared like Cortez on a peak in Darien—though his peak was only the sandbagged window of a flour-mill, out into a new world. What was it to bring to him and Ireland? A new and wonderful life? An answer to all his noble childhood dreams? Or an end to all things? He has been called a dreamer. But not even in his wildest dreams can he have had even the faintest conception of what the fates held in store for him and for his people. But even if he could have foreseen some of it, this was no time for dreaming. The cry was out, "Upon them! Victory sits in our helms!" Already rifle-fire was crackling in the distance. The night was falling, and who should tell what that ominous dark should bring?

CHAPTER II.

*"How oft has the banshee cried!
How oft has Death untied
Bright links that Glory wove—
Sweet bonds entwined by Love!
Peace to each manly soul that sleepeth.
Rest to each faithful eye that weepeth.
Long may the fair and brave
Sigh o'er the hero's grave!*

*"We're fallen on evil days!
Star after star decays,
Every bright name that shed
Light o'er the land is fled.
Dark falls the tear of him that mourneth
Lost joy, or hope that ne'er returneth,
But brightly flows the tear
Wept o'er a hero's bier.*

*"Quenched are our beacon lights—
Thou of the Hundred Fights!
Thou on whose burning tongue
Truth, peace and freedom hung!
Both mute—but long as valour shineth,
Or Mercy's soul at war repineth,
So long shall Erin's pride
Tell how they lived and died!"*

—Tom Moore.

On the morning of April 24th, 1916, there were just under two thousand five hundred British troops in Dublin, divided among five barracks—Marlborough, Richmond, Portobello, Royal, and Wellington. Within half an hour they could have marched to any central point of the capital. Obviously swift action was required if the insurgents were to take up their allotted positions without bloodshed. In point of fact, so swiftly did they move that at the moment Eamon de Valera was occupying Bolands' Mills the whole force of about eleven hundred Irish Volunteers were throwing themselves into similar positions all around the city, and within twenty minutes the capital was in their hands. It is difficult to imagine that the tide of any nation's history has ever turned more swiftly than that.

The Volunteer plan was simple. They would hold a series of strong positions in a wide circle about Dublin. They would retain the freedom of the centre of the city by means of a few inner positions. The military history of the week consists in the gradual battering in of those outer strongholds and the tightening of a circle around the main inner ones, until O'Connell Street crumbled away in a hell of fire.

It is not difficult to visualise the scene. The Liffey, flowing from west to east, divides Dublin in two. On the northern side is Fairview, with its open spaces, cut by the embanked railway line from Amiens Street to Belfast. On the south side

is Ringsend, with its inextricable network of dirty, narrow streets, with another railway line, running from Westland Row to Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), the port of disembarkation for troops arriving from England. Between lies Dublin Bay. From these two jaws of the calipers the circle went to Ballsbridge, Leeson Street, Portobello, Dolphin's Barn, across the river to the Four Courts, around the northern side of the city to Fairview, and back to Liberty Hall, on the Quays. The inner positions were the Post Office, the City Hall, the Royal College of Surgeons, and Jacob's Factory. Three major errors, from a military point of view, were the failure to take the Telephone Exchange and Dublin Castle, the placing of the Headquarters Staff in the Post Office, and the apparent decision to fall back on the centre of the city instead of out of it to the mountains. But the Volunteers did not hope for success. One day of glory was all they asked for. "Thank God, Pearse," said Connolly in the Post Office, as he clasped Pearse's right hand, "thank God we have lived to see this day." And as the days wore on, Pearse, glowing still with pride of his race, made the pale, anxious faces of his young followers light up, as if a new flame had leaped within them to match the flames crackling outside, by saying as he threw his hand wide over the burning roofs, "Her name is splendid among the names of cities!" No! Their dream was not for a military success, though they were ready to fight like tigers until they were driven to the

wall. They dreamt of greater things than that, and therefore well might A.E. write:—

*“Here’s to you, P³earse, your dream, not mine,
But yet the thought for which you fell
Turns all Life’s water into wine!”*

BOLANDS’ MILLS.

Strategically one of the essential lines of attack and defence was entrusted to De Valera. He was Brigade Adjutant for Dublin, but he returned to his old battalion to occupy Westland Row, a stretch of the Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) line, Bolands’ Mill, and other buildings. Bolands’ Mill is a gaunt, gray flour mill on the canal, which proved a storm-centre in the fighting. Near it is an old distillery, and in this he stationed, with consummate strategical skill, a few snipers, displaying boldly several tricolours so as to distract the attention of the British from the mill, where his main forces were encamped. On Monday evening, also, he sent his men to talk among the people and tell them openly of his supposed plans for pouring men, under cover of darkness, into the distillery. The result was that, when the bombardment began, the distillery was shattered to pieces, while the bakery escaped almost unhurt. In action he proved himself a born organiser and soldier, cool and brave in every unexpected crisis or desperate situation. I have heard one of his men say that De Valera, hurrying to and fro among the barricades, or directing the firing from

the tall windows of the mill, indifferent to the bullets thudding into the flourbags they used for defence, or ricochetting off the window-ledges, reminded him of Napoleon on the bridge at Lodi. His lieutenants had great difficulty in keeping him from performing every dangerous task himself. "Be careful, Dev.," one of them said. "We can't afford to lose you." "There are better men than I being killed," cried De Valera. And another time: "Dev., remember we can't do without you! It's for you we're fighting!" "It's for Ireland!" he replied angrily, and once more thrust his rifle into a loop-hole and fired, emptying and re-emptying his magazine until, when he did rest, they said there was powder on his lips, and the man who took his gun from him found the barrel almost red-hot. That is typical of De Valera—a man of little talk, he burns himself out in action. Look at his face to-day. Every crisis in the history of Ireland during the past sixteen years has sculptured itself in lines upon his face—and that awful week, among others, has left its indelible mark. Where else does he get that leanness of face, that brooding shadow, but from the inner fire that has been eating his heart ever since he heard the name—Ireland? In that he is very like Terence MacSwiney. Have you ever compared their features? They are very like.

THE CUCHULAINN OF EASTER WEEK.

As Beggar's Bush Barracks was in the vicinity

fighting began almost at once in this quarter, and the evening of Monday was raucous with the crackle of the rifle-fire of snipers in the distillery and the mill, and others acting as outposts on houses on Northumberland Road and Clanwilliam Place and other houses in the neighbourhood of Mount Street Bridge, commanding the road from Dun Laoghaire into the city. This obdurate, relentless battle of marksmen went on all through the week, and out-lastcd the rising in other parts of the city. It is a strangely mixed quarter, the squalid slums of Ringsend contrasting with the staid and respectable houses of the Mount Street area, but the fighting equalised all. Rich and poor alike crouched in the basements of mansion or tenement while the air thundered overhead. The stray shots flung the ragged body of a slum-child on the road, and, doubled up by the railings of an area, there lay for the whole of one day the fur-coated body of a wealthy professional man. The dark and narrow laneways, the crumbling, crazy houses, the innumerable alleys, the yards that abut on one another and make a kind of fenced street between the blocks, the gimcrack walls that can be easily bored to cut a retreat, and in the better quarter the Georgian style of architecture, that gives on the smooth unbroken roofs another aerial street, made the entire quarter, rich and poor alike, an ideal battleground for the adventurous sniper. The troops never knew where the next bullet might come from, and, as an armoured car would

crawl slowly along below with its machine-gun spraying death at the roofs, the sniper had merely to lie low behind a chimney or a parapet, or slide away to some other vantage-point, where he could begin his deadly work again. It was a terribly dangerous kind of warfare, demanding the energies and the coolness of an acrobat, as well as a steady hand and eye. Bolands' Mill was the Headquarters of this district, and it was never stormed. Every window was fortified with flour-bags, as a result of which all that week the fighters within presented a very strange appearance. To the natural pallor of face of men excited and sleepless, dirt and dust on their clothes, blood-spattered and bullet-torn, the flour-moted atmosphere added a slightly bizarre and rather ghastly whiteness, and as they moved about in the gloom of the mill at their deathly tasks, carrying gelignite for safety to the basements, bearing water to extinguish fires in every possible sort of vessel, from milk-pitchers to churns, attending to the wounded, or stealing out under the roofs to go into battle with an enemy sharpshooter, they had the ghostly appearance of men already under the shadow of death.

THE SHERWOOD FORESTERS TRAPPED.

De Valera all through that terrible week, during which he became gradually isolated from his chiefs at the Post Office, was coolness itself. On Monday evening two thousand extra troops were rushed from the Curragh, and from Belfast on

Tuesday another thousand came. Then troops poured in from England on Wednesday, and with amazing stupidity they marched four abreast into De Valera's trap at Mount Street Bridge. Half a dozen Volunteers were here able to do terrible havoc until the house collapsed in flames upon them, and only one man escaped. The Sherwood Foresters will not yet have forgotten that march to Dublin. By Thursday shelling was general. The very ground beneath the bakery trembled. "What shall we do if the roof falls in?" asked one of his men of De Valera. "Let it," he replied. He was everywhere, that tall, commanding, picturesque, lean-jawed figure, encouraging his men. But the enemy was closing in on him, as on every position, taking some, though they never took his, drawing the chain tighter about his chief, Pearse, in O'Connell Street. From the tall roof of the mill he could see of nights across the calm waters of the bay, where the British searchlights were sweeping from the Great Northern Railway embankment the Fairview line of defence; he could see the glow of O'Connell Street, a deep orange fire in the sky, and hear the rumble of the artillery lashing brickwork and limestone into pieces. Over there was Pearse and Connolly and The O'Rahilly and the three tattered tricolours floating bravely over the Post Office. The *Helga* had chugged up the Liffey and blown Liberty Hall into a ruin. There was no lull in the ceaseless crackling of rifle and machine-gun,

which had pock-marked his own position until it was like a sieve. His men slept for sheer exhaustion while the air was thunderous about them, but, desperate as his position was, he must have felt as he walked among the youthful sleeping forms, rosaries about their necks, dark blood-patches spreading slowly through the bandages, or where they slept, not for a while but in their last eternal sleep of death, that this glorious if terrible adventure must surely have a wonderful harvest of nationalist emotion in Ireland. If it did not have that result it would have none. It was a desperate gamble, and he was likely to pay for it in any eventuality with his life. These young boys had given much, but he would leave behind him a wife and five children. Surely his warm southern blood must have been moved. How dear and cruel is the price that Cathleen demands from her children! And all the while the tornado went on, searchlights whirling in the sky, star-shells bursting, bullets carving little channels in the coping stones of the building as enfiling troops poured a ceaseless stream of lead into the rebel strongholds, and that fear-inspiring ricocheting hum, worse than the sound of any explosion, and that can only be appreciated by anyone who has been under fire. Those last nights, Thursday and Friday, were terrible. In the slum quarters the women and children were in a desperate plight for lack of milk and food. The sustained bombardment, which seemed as if it would flatten

the whole of Dublin, had almost driven them mad with fear, and, the darkness descending on them increased their terrors. Their cries and shrieks, and the cries of the little ones constantly rose in the night air. War, that they had so often read of in the years preceding, had suddenly and unexpectedly descended on them in all the horrors of reality. How the Volunteers managed to survive so long in that blazing inferno still remains an astonishment and a wonder, as it was then to the Dubliners of the outer suburbs, who saw troops, fully equipped with artillery and machine-guns, pouring in daily from England. Well might Connolly write from the fire-blackened, shell-shattered, but as yet not abandoned Post Office, where he lay with a gangrened foot and a shattered thigh :—

“Soldiers, let us remind you what you have done. For the first time in 700 years the flag of a free Ireland floats triumphantly over Dublin City. The British Army, whose exploits we are for ever having dinned into our ears, which boasts of having stormed the Dardanelles and the lines of the Marne, behind their artillery and machine-guns are afraid to advance to the attack or storm any positions held by our forces.”

He made special reference to De Valera :—

“Commandant De Valera stretches in a position from the Gas Works to Westland Row, holding Bolands’ Bakery, Bolands’ Mills,

Dublin and South-Eastern Railway, and dominating Merrion Square. . . . Courage, boys, we are winning. . . . Never had man or woman a grander cause, never was a cause more grandly served."

That encouraging message was written on Friday, but it never reached De Valera. It remains from a copy found on the dead body of The O'Rahilly, who fell, riddled by a machine-gun at a hundred yards' range, in a dash down Moore Lane out of the blazing, roofless Post Office. The dawns of Saturday and Sunday were to rise over the Bay before, unbeaten and uncowed, De Valera was to be among the last fighting men to surrender.

Until that happened, exhausted and sleepless as he and his men were, hopelessly outnumbered, ten, rather *twenty to one*, he would defy his enemies to storm his position. The defence of Bolands' Mills is one of the most glorious pages of Easter Week—for *they never did storm it.*

CHAPTER III.

*"This heritage to the race of kings,
Their children and their children's seed
Have wrought their prophecies in deed
Of terrible and splendid things."*

—Joseph Plunkett.

AFTER that terrible dash across the bullet-swept and flame-lit Moore Lane, in through stables and houses to new positions, the Post Office garrison had spent Friday night boring through walls for a retreat, snatching a few moments' sleep whenever the chance offered, eating out of their hands as they wielded the crowbar and pick. The Post Office roof had collapsed as the last man left the blazing building, and the flames, released from their imprisonment, roared, black and smoke-thickened, dark-red and venomous above them in the air. All Saturday morning they waited, surprised at the strange lull outside. The O'Rahilly was dead, Connolly wounded, communications cut. The end was clearly come. Negotiations were opened by the British by means of a priest, and Pearse, firm as a rock, walked out to discuss the terms of surrender with the enemy. At two o'clock the Post Office garrison marched out into

O'Connell Street, lined with troops, strangely peaceful and calm after the thunder of the week. They were only a couple of Hundred, ragged now, and dazed with weariness and lack of sleep.

Amongst those men in the Post Office was Michael Collins.

From that on, the other positions, one by one, laid down their arms—as Pearse's message said, "in order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered." De Valera alone, as late as Sunday morning, had not yet surrendered, and he was, in fact, the last officer to capitulate. By Saturday heavy guns mounted on motor-lorries had crept closer and closer to his main position, and their fire battered the building until it could be no longer considered tenable. It was but a repetition of the same process which had been going on all through the week in different parts of the city. At first the men of Bolands' Mill had been able to leave their position under cover of dark and return home for food or a rest; but, by now, this was impossible—they were hemmed in and fighting for their lives, surrounded by thousands of British troops, their communications cut, listening to the hoarse clamour of gunfire that grew more and more sporadic, and diminished considerably in the afternoon of Saturday. That terrible feeling of doubt crept into their hearts for the first time. This silence was infinitely more

terrifying than the previous inferno of concussion on concussion. When a priest who had been allowed through the cordons to attend the dying and wounded, civilians or Volunteers, brought word on Saturday night of the O'Connell Street surrender, De Valera could not believe it to be true, and at once refused to surrender unless on a written order. Severe as the casualties were, he and his men were ready to go on fighting until they had fired their last shot, and even after the written order was brought to him on Sunday morning, and he sadly decided that he must obey, isolated groups of his men still refused to yield. As late as Wednesday individual snipers were still duelling desperately with the enemy, dodging from roof to roof, with the cordon gradually closing tighter and tighter, until finally the last man was either captured or, abandoning his gun, dived into the labyrinth of the Ringsend slums and was lost in the crowd. (It will be remembered how Sean O'Casey utilises this kind of incident in the amazing last act of *The Plough and the Stars*.)

THE SURRENDER.

And so it happened that that Sunday morning was almost as silent and quiet as the Sunday before. The crackle of flames might still be heard or an occasional sniper's bullet. The Mass bells' resonant chime mingled with the clanging grounding of arms where the British troops lined the streets about Ringsend waiting for the

"hordes" of rebels to march out from their lairs. It was from the dispensary opposite Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital that De Valera, firm as a rock, led out his little band of ragged, exhausted, blood-stained men. Slowly in that ghastly place, stars of blood on the pavement, a dead body or two, huddled as if in uncomfortable sleep, on the street, and farther up the serried troops, De Valera lined up his men for their final instructions. Dazed with the experiences they had been through, there were tears in the eyes of some—they were overwrought—while others, proud of their leader, closed their lips tightly or looked scornfully at the enemy. De Valera himself, his own eyes full of gloom, gave the commands in a low, vibrant tone. Then, with the face of a victor rather than of a beaten man, he marched at the head of his men for the last time. A little white flag was fluttering beside him, but his eyes were still defiant in the hour of the shattering of all his dreams. He was defiant, but if there was a suggestion of tears in his dark eyes also, who could blame him? He had bravely fought—and, as far as he then knew, bravely lost. Before him there was nothing but the firing-squad, or at best a life in a felon's cell. No wonder he faced the English officer who met him with the despairing words, "You can deal with me as you like; but I demand proper treatment for my men." Then, looking gloomily at the still smouldering ruins, the streets black with troops, the wounded, the dead, his own small band,

he murmured to himself, "Ah! If the people had only fought with knives and forks!" But the Great Adventure was ended. Cathleen seemed bound tighter than ever in her chains,

*"And the high house of O'Neill
Gone down to the dust. . . ."*

It is now over sixteen years since that glorious Week, and no disparager of the Irish cause has yet been able to besmirch the history of that gallant adventure, or detract from the bravery of those who took part in it. But if it was magnificent, it was terrible. Five hundred British military were killed and wounded, and almost as many civilians. British shell-fire and the conflagrations that followed caused damage to the extent of two and a half million pounds. Buildings like the Royal Hibernian Academy, the Linen Hall and the Post Office were reduced to smoke-blackened shells. How many Volunteers were killed or wounded will never be known, but in Glasnevin Cemetery alone from April 27th to May 4th there were 415 burials, of which 216 were deaths from gunshot wounds. One of the most glorious streets in Europe remained a tangled mass of ironwork, fallen stones and crumbling brick.

SENTENCED TO DEATH.

And then the madness of blood-lust entered the hearts of the victors. *Vae Victis* was the cry—

Woe to the beaten! It seemed as if no power on earth could save De Valera, and from the moment of his arrest he had, himself, no further hope of life. Were it not for his wife and children, indeed, he had no use for it. He had handed his revolver and rifle to his captor with his mind prepared for his end, and for all those days that followed after he shut life out from his mind. He was a marked man, and he knew it. He had gone into this fight expecting the worst, and he was prepared for it. Slowly he watched his death approach. On Wednesday they shot Pearse, MacDonagh and old Tom Clarke, who had already spent fifteen years in a convict cell. On Thursday they shot Joseph Plunkett, Edward Daly, O'Hanrahan and Willy Pearse. MacBride was shot in the dawn of Friday. On the following Monday, while Ireland stood aghast with horror, they shot Con Colbert, Edmund Kent, Michael Mallin and J. J. Heuston. On Friday morning—would this long-drawn-out horror never end?—they shot James Connolly and Sean MacDiarmada. Clearly they were coming nearer and nearer to De Valera, and those who had him close to their minds and hearts, especially his overwrought wife, felt that any morning the news would come that he, too, had for the last time faced death and the six roaring rifle-barrels of the firing party. Thomas Kent was the last to die. It was known that De Valera had been sentenced to death, but ever since the 3rd of May efforts

had been made to use his American citizenship to save him. It is certain that, were it not for the fact that he was one of the last to surrender, he would have gone before the firing-squad with the first batches. As it was, the horror aroused in the country, the protests in the British Parliament, and, perhaps, the gallantry of his fight, preserved him, as if by a Divine Providence, to lead his people in the great struggle that was to follow, and to lead them as he leads them to-day. With William Cosgrave (the ex-President), Eoin MacNeill and four others he was sentenced to penal servitude for life, and with them and some two thousand five hundred others he joined the long roll of Irish felons. With calm and dignity De Valera had faced the court-martial which sentenced him to death: with calm and dignity he received the news of his reprieve. Looking up from his book—it was a copy of *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*—he thanked the messenger and went on with his reading.

PRISON.

By the end of May 139 men had been sentenced. The courts were busy during those weeks, and their decisions prompt, and 2,330 men had been deported. Herded in the hold of a cattle-boat, handcuffed in pairs, they were shipped—much as Mitchel was shipped to Australia in a boat where there were cockroaches as long as his finger—to a variety of English prisons, or to the

dreary internment camp of Frongoch, in Wales, where German prisoners had lived, or, rather, existed during the early^e years of the War. De Valera was imprisoned in Dartmoor, dressed and degraded as any English convict. The recent disclosures with regard to life in this drab, fog-encircled convict prison among the Devon moors, and such accounts as Tom Clarke's memoirs of his prison life, make it unnecessary to describe the inhuman conditions under which he and his comrades lived here for the first months of their imprisonment. But it was summer, and the west winds blew with them across the Bristol Channel the scented airs of Ireland. Rebellion was an unquenchable spark in this man's breast, and those sweet memories of life in Ireland began to awaken his despairing soul, and shortly blew into a new flame that hot seed of fire within him. He had fought to die; now he would fight to live. Helpless, at the utter mercy of his captors, a convicted and a dangerous felon in the eyes of the prison officials, he had nothing to support him but his indomitable will. He broke that prison tyranny after six months' painful resistance. Punishments, bread and water, solitary confinement—against them all he and his comrades stood out, and by December, with Desmond Fitzgerald and Dr. Richard Hayes, he was transferred to Maidstone Jail. Meanwhile in Portland and Frongoch the same resistance was producing the first of a long series of stormy prison strikes, and in

these encounters the men of Easter Week and their comrades from throughout the country began to consolidate into a new force; it was in English jails that the nucleus was formed of those organisations which, five years later, were to smash the forces of repression in Ireland. Once a bullying Governor raged because he would not stand up and remove his prison cap in humble salute. "Make the fellow stand!" he cried to the warders. Rising, De Valera brushed the advancing warders to one side, and, striding up to the astonished Governor, he looked him between the eyes. "I would remind you," he said contemptuously, "that I have just as much contempt for a bully standing or seated."

In December the Frongoch internees were released—among them Collins and Griffith. In the same year De Valera was removed to Lewes, where the majority of the sentenced men were now congregated, and here he became and was elected the chosen leader of the prisoners. So that when he was ultimately released, in June 1917, and landed in Ireland he was acclaimed there as the surviving leader of 1916 and the acknowledged leader of the surviving rank and file. Before that happened, however, he had led many a stormy battle behind prison walls. One of his first acts of rebellion in Lewes was when he met Eoin MacNeill in the prison yard. Remembering Pearse's words, "Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best interests of Ireland," he

at once called his men to attention and MacNeill was given a military salute. As a result the prisoners were sentenced to three days' bread and water. Far from daunting him, such treatment only spurred him to bolder and yet bolder resistance, and finally, in May 1917, he planned a massed prison revolt, in which he refused to allow his men to be classed any longer as criminals, demanded treatment as prisoners of war, and threatened to hold the jail against warders and police until the military, if necessary, should be called to shoot them down. The men were confined to their cells for weeks, and finally De Valera and a few others were removed in chains to other prisons, where fresh attempts were made to reduce them to the level of ordinary criminals. But, outside, the people were already massing against this brutal treatment of gallant men, under the leadership of Collins and Griffith and others, such as Count Plunkett, who had won an election over the old Irish Party in Roscommon in February 1917; while in April a Lewes "convict," Joseph MacGuinness, was returned in Longford. Mr. Lloyd George, who was playing for American support in the War, was staging an Irish "Convention" and found these events very embarrassing. The result was that in June it was announced that all the 1916 prisoners were to be released unconditionally. On June 18th 1917, just a little over a year after the events of Easter Week, De Valera landed at

Dun Laoghaire at the head of the prisoners. They drove through the crowded streets of Dublin, cheered on all sides, singing as they drove, the song that was later to become the anthem of their country :

*"Sons of the Gael,
Men of the Pale,
The long-watched day is breaking.
The serried ranks of Innisfail
Shall set the tyrant quaking.
Our camp-fires now are burning low,
See in the east a silvery glow,
Out yonder waits the Saxon foe,
So chant a soldier's song!"*

Thousands saw for the first time the tall, dark-eyed figure of their future leader. Those sad eyes of his, dark and deep, but transparent with honesty, lit up to see the serried crowds and to hear them roar their cheers to him and to his men. It was a proud moment for him and, as he rightly felt, for the Irish cause. And as he listened to the words of the song echoed by a thousand throats, the Marseillaise of Ireland, he must have felt his heart leap at the prophecy of the words, *See in the east a silvery glow!* Why should he not? Was there not a new day dawning for his beloved land?

PART TWO.
FROM 1916 TO THE TREATY.

CHAPTER I.

WITH the release of De Valera from jail in June 1917 a new era opens in the history of Ireland, and his own life enters on a new stage. Hitherto he had been, in the main, a soldier; now he is to take up the role of politician and statesman, never to lay it down again. And yet, being the leader of an unfree people, his life as a statesman was to have all the excitement and abnormality of a soldier's. He was still the marked man, the man who had been sentenced to death for treason and to penal servitude for life in a convict prison as a danger to the State. For if to the Irish people he was the Sampson who would crush the Philistinian tyrants, to the British he was the ringleader of a murderous gang of rebels. He was faced by the enormous task of building up a new party, a new policy, of giving that party a policy and a constitution, of gathering up and uniting into a compact body all the stray forces and tendencies of nationalism in Ireland, of reorganising the Volunteers, of educating the people to a proper understanding of the policy of Sinn Fein—all at the same time that he fought the remnants of the old Irish Parliamentary Party, and carried on, at first a defensive, and later an aggressive warfare with the British authorities in

Ireland. He had, of course, able helpers, and due and well-earned honour has been paid to the great work done in different fields by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. But it must be remembered that he stood for five years before the Irish people as their acknowledged leader, and, as with every leader, he has to bear now, as he bore then, the responsibility, the praise or blame, for the success or failure of the campaign he led. It is only just, therefore, to stress the magnitude of the task he faced when he came out of prison in June 1917 and took on his shoulders a responsibility that would have daunted any man and broken a lesser one. He was a pioneer, and he quarried a new Ireland out of the old. He had no precedents to guide him, and he had a thousand critics. He was to find that, hard as it had been to face death for Ireland, it was to be at least just as hard to live for her. So O'Connell found it, so Butt found it, so Parnell found it, so Redmond found it. And so he, too, has found Ireland a cruel taskmaster. Night and day, year in and year out, he was to work for his countrymen, and some who laid the laurels on his brows in 1917 crushed the thorns on it five years after.

POLITICAL LIFE BEGINS.

In June 1917, however, it was truly "roses, roses all the way." The fame of 1916 already hung about him, and his reputation gained in prison as a leader of men. Moreover, he had been selected

as a candidate for the vacant constituency of East Clare, hitherto represented by Willie Redmond, who had been killed in action in France, on June 7th, eleven days before the release of De Valera and his fellow-prisoners. Here in Daniel O'Connell's constituency the released felon stood before the world and his fellow-men as the standard-bearer of a new Ireland. Yet he hardly realised, as yet, the nature of the fight to which his country had called him. Like Washington, who left his farm for the battlefield, De Valera had left the class-room for the barricades and the prison cell. Now he was called to the public platform, and Ireland laid its hopes and half-formed aspirations in his hands. "God give me patience," he said at this time. "God give me patience to address all these meetings!" It was only gradually that it dawned on him that he was the chosen leader of a nation, and to the fight to achieve its freedom he must for ever sacrifice all his own. Slowly he began then to see that a gesture behind the barricades is one thing, but a gesture from a public platform is quite another affair. The people were ready to vote for him for his own sake, in admiration of the men of Easter Week, in contempt for the Irish Party, even in hate of British rule, but they would not go on voting on these lines for ever unless a definite policy and a definite line of action were put before them. So by day he spoke and by night he thought, and that silence that is now habitual with him

descended on him for the first time. He became the thinker after being the fighter, and the furrows on his brows deepened and that tell-tale little line between his eyes cut deeper into his flesh. This is the side of De Valera's life to which little or no thought is ever given, but it is by far the most important side. It is by his integrity, and depth, and soundness as a political thinker, or his shallowness and dishonesty and duplicity that any statesman must stand or fall in the final judgment which history will make of his fitness as a leader. The year he had spent in jail and those early days of his political career were the most important years of his life, for in them he had to grasp the fundamental problems of his country's cause. In those years he mapped out the uncharted country of his life, and of the life of his people.

The Clare election of 1917 was fought furiously, and even bitterly—a harsh introduction for De Valera to the arena. It was clear to the "Party" that if they lost this fight their day was done, and they fought to the last ditch. One of their partisans expressed their hopes for the success of Mr. Patrick Lynch, K.C—their candidate—in a lampoon that was more humorous than prophetic:—

*"De Valera so quare O, has come down to
Clare O,
A mighty great hayro, the Party to quinch.
But this bould caballero shall doff his som-
brero
And sink to the rere O, behind Paddy Lynch!"*

Alas! for their hopes, De Valera was elected by 5,010 to 2,035 votes. The election brought his name before the entire country, and from that on his name took the place that Parnell's had once held in the hearts of the Irish people.

The forces which he found to hand were, apart from various unorganised sections of nationalist opinion—Sinn Fein, the Volunteers, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League, Fianna Eireann, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Of these, he would not actively take part in the I.R.B.—although he had been a member of the society before Easter Week—and, in my opinion, it was the gravest mistake of his entire political career. It was to have, ultimately, the most serious consequences for the nation and for himself.

The great difficulty of every political leader in Ireland from O'Connell to his own day had always been the same difficulty of uniting in one the two almost irreconcilable influences—the physical force men and the constitutionalists (or semi-constitutionalists, as Sinn Fein was in 1917). The Young Irelanders discredited O'Connell. The Fenians and the Land Leaguers almost smashed Parnell. The Sinn Fein Volunteers shouldered Redmond into a premature obscurity. The I.R.B. were never really controlled by De Valera, and, as their power grew and grew, they became gradually a menace to his influence, and finally they outmanoeuvred him. Had De Valera joined

the new I.R.B. in 1917 there might have been no Civil War in 1922.

DE VALERA'S LIFE TASK.

Immediately after Clare he threw himself into the work of reorganising Sinn Fein and the Volunteers.

From the beginning De Valera stood between these two forces. It was necessary, in view of the forthcoming Annual Convention of Sinn Fein, or Ard Fheis, to revise the Sinn Fein Constitution. Day after day was spent in argument with Cathal Brugha and Arthur Griffith—the Father of Sinn Fein—trying to placate the “die-hard” on the one side and the self-confessed compromiser on the other, Griffith always a little distrait—he was the real dreamer of that trio—holding that the Constitution was a little too stiff for the people, Cathal holding to the military creed of 1916. In Irish there is a proverb which says that “in a quarrel whoever comes out safe, or does not come out safe, the man between never comes out safe.” In this case the proverb had the delusive wisdom of the Sibylline oracle: the two extremes have died without proving the wisdom of their beliefs, and Eamon de Valera has suffered so much in his honourable attempts to hold the balance between warring parties for the sake of his country that he is more likely than not to assent to the truth of the old saying.

Meanwhile the country was being roused by all sorts of meetings, concerts, lectures, parades, aeridheachts, feiseanna, sports, and games. Each organisation contributed to the national resurgence. But nothing helped so much as coercion. There were many arrests and raidings for the purpose of arrests, and when in September Thomas Ashe died in Mountjoy Jail while on hunger-strike the whole country was stirred to its depths.

In this atmosphere the Ard Fheis met, and Arthur Griffith standing aside, De Valera was elected President—backed by the I.R.B., who distrusted Griffith's pacifism. "In Eamon de Valera," said Griffith, "we have a soldier and a statesman." In conclave De Valera showed himself to be a man who never played to the gallery, or tried to exploit his personality; he had, and it is still true, very little facial play, smiled rarely, and rarely gestured. He presented a stern appearance to the crowded Mansion House, with his dark hair, dark eyes, and dark face, sharply chiselled—especially in the line from nose to mouth. He insisted on a careful discussion of every point—his critics thought *too* careful, and said he had the professorial trick of delaying on small points—but it was due actually to his passion for detail and his desire that the meeting should not be a mere show-meeting, but a serious and scrupulous discussion of the position and policy of the new Ireland.

THE MEDIATOR.

Once again he had to stand between the Right and Left wings, and a cynical observer, after listening to his opening speech, declared this man to be a born leader, because he had so astutely satisfied both. But has it not been his task ever since he took upon his shoulders the responsibility of leadership? Is it not this responsibility, above all, of keeping peace between extreme factions that has made of him at times of crisis the buffer between warring parties and brought down on his head the vituperation which the factions really deserved? It is his most ardent desire to keep peace between his fellow-countrymen. It is a thankless task. And it is a task that only a patriot would attempt, and a born leader achieve. For five years he kept the balance he struck in 1917. If after that he failed to maintain it, the fault is not his, but the fault of overpowering circumstances. He is trying to maintain it to-day, and no man but can wish him well. He has sacrificed his entire life, his peace and comfort and happiness to that unselfish cause. Even if he should ultimately fail in it, such a failure would be more honourable than the facile victory of the extremist who wins his point at the expense of his country, or the opportunist who makes no attempt to go to the root of a serious problem.

Subsequently the Volunteers met in secret, and here the I.R.B. showed its hand. The posts of Communications, Organisation, Intelligence and

Secretary were given to members of the Brotherhood, and although De Valera was elected President, *the majority of the Executive were members of the secret society.* It must be remembered, in the light of what follows, that the Volunteers were directed by this Resident Executive—although there was also a so-called General Executive, which had no real power or influence. De Valera's real influence, therefore, his actual and potential control over his followers, lay mainly in Sinn Fein, or in the political side. The military forces, the Volunteers, were an autonomous body. By him in Sinn Fein stood Cathal Brugha, among others; on the Resident Executive of the Volunteers—Michael Collins, Eamonn Duggan, Sean McGarry, Fionan Lynch, and others. Early in his career the stage was set for the tragic drama of conflict which at one period almost threatened to close it.

MORE COERCION.

It was in the winter of 1917 and spring of 1918 that Sinn Fein began, to all appearances, to lose ground. Although in August of 1917 Mr. Cosgrave had won another victory over the "Party" in Kilkenny, in Armagh, Waterford and Tyrone the "Party" defeated the abstentionist candidates. In other words, unless De Valera could put forcibly to the people the meaning and significance of the cause for which Easter Week had been fought he might soon find himself at the head of

a mere handful of followers—and that despite the fact that Arthur Griffith had been expounding the Sinn Fein idea since 1905.

But once again coercion came to the help of the nationalist idea. In April 1918 the English Government declared that Conscription would be extended to Ireland. Within a month 500,000 young men had joined the Volunteers. The Irish Party abandoned Westminster. Every force in Ireland, Sinn Fein, the "Party," the Independents, Labour, joined in opposition to the proposal. What the Chief Secretary, Mr. Duke, had said at an earlier date was true now: "The young men of Ireland were being recruited as enemies of the Empire and the Allies. The leaders were reorganising the Irish Volunteers to create a new rebellion in Ireland." Mr. Lloyd George threatened: "The Government should take action—not provocative action, but firm action." And meanwhile De Valera turned to the Volunteers.

On Friday, 17th May 1918, as he alighted from the train at Greystones, where he lived at the time, De Valera was arrested and hurried to prison in Frongoch. A few people saw him taken aboard the boat at Dun Laoghaire, and asked him for some message for the country. With a slight smile, he turned to them and spoke across the intervening rifles: "Be calm and confident." He remained in prison for nine months, and then early in February 1919 he escaped dramatically from Lincoln Prison.

CHAPTER II.

It may be said that from the spring of 1918 Irish affairs began not so much to move as to whirl. On the 9th of April Mr. Lloyd George had proposed the extension of the Conscription Act to Ireland. On the 13th Field Marshal Haig declared that the Allies had their "backs to the wall," and, "believing in the justice of our cause, each of us must fight on to the end." On the 17th of May, Ireland having massed together to resist Conscription, De Valera had, as described, been arrested with scores of the other leaders of Sinn Fein and the Volunteers and thrown into prison. In April, too, the Irish Convention had produced its farcically divided report, having wasted the better part of a year in useless talk, and having failed in everything except in providing the British Government with a reply to foreign critics on the state of Ireland. In France the Germans had broken through the Allied lines.

England was roused, and Ireland was roused, and the gloves were off on both sides. England against Ireland, Ireland against England, were both being lashed into a fury. And yet, how

inevitable it all was if only both sides had foreseen it. The sins of a hundred years, on the one side of commission, on the other of omission, were coming home to roost. From O'Connell to Parnell, and long after him, the Irish had been languid in their demands for autonomy. On the other side, as early as 1844 Disraeli had told the British House of Commons: "In Ireland there is a dense population in extreme distress; and a landed aristocracy the richest of whom dwell in a foreign capital. What could honourable men, reading of such a country, think but that the remedy is revolution? But in Ireland there cannot be a revolution, because she is joined to a more powerful neighbour. That means," he concluded, "that if the cause of Ireland's misery is a connection which prevents a justifiable revolution, the Irish problem is the problem of effecting all those changes by policy that a revolution could effect by brute force." Yet nothing had been done along those lines; and now, in the hour of England's difficulty, Irish rebels remembered their old saying—*and they seized their opportunity.*

So, while the Volunteers met in the lonely glens of Ireland and drilled in secret for the next clash, tanks lumbered menacingly through Dublin and Cork and Limerick. Men began to sleep away from home. Police began to retire to their barracks after nightfall and peep by day through the window shutters. Michael Collins and his lieutenants rushed to and fro between

Dublin and Liverpool and London. On one occasion Cathal Brugha was in London perfecting plans for personal reprisals on the heads of the British Government if Conscription should be enforced, with its inevitable aftermath of bloodshed. Arms were being imported. Government offices were being tapped for information. Munitions were being manufactured in secret. Propaganda was being spread publicly and secretly throughout the population. All this, as yet, was indeed no more than a preparation and a foretaste of what was coming. The ground was being made ready for the battle of the following years. It is important to remember, however, the tense atmosphere that gradually developed in Ireland from the summer of 1918. In that hot, dry, excited air a name like De Valera's was like a torch to powder.

Sinn Fein was suppressed by proclamation in July, and with it the Volunteers, Gaelic League and Cumann na mBan.

All this time De Valera chafed in jail, and his lieutenants outside chafed to have him with them. In December, the War having come to an end, a General Election was held—the first General Election since 1916, the first appeal to the entire country to declare for or against Sinn Fein. Two things mainly appealed to the electorate. The "Party" was discredited in the eyes of the people, and the British Government was in utter disfavour. Out of 106 Irish representatives, the

country returned 73 Separatists. Attempts have been made to minimise the historical significance of that vote. It is true that the people had, as yet, only a vague idea of the full connotations of the Sinn Fein ideal. "Now that they have voted Sinn Fein," said one leader after the election, "we must tell them what Sinn Fein is." But one thing they knew—Sinn Fein was abstentionist and separatist, *and they voted for that*. Sinn Fein also, however, had always advocated the right of Ireland to appeal to the Peace Conference, and for this reason it was of paramount importance that De Valera should be free to preside at the first meeting of the abstentionist Parliament—the first Dáil Eireann. Actually with him there were in prison thirty-six elected representatives of the people : three more were deported, and six were "on the run."

THE FIRST DAIL EIREANN.

When the first Dail met in January 1919 only twenty-seven members could be present. A Declaration of Independence was read and passed, followed by a Message to the Free Nations of the World, and a Democratic Programme. Almost simultaneously, at Soloheadbeg, in Tipperary, one of the first ambushes occurred, when, under the leadership of Dan Breen, two policemen were shot dead and a quantity of gelignite seized. Both sides of the movement were in action—and the leader was behind prison bars. One can imagine

his feelings and understand his eager attempts to find a way of escape. The responsibility would one day lie on his shoulders—and here he was powerless to aid or interfere. One thing he was able to do in jail. He planned for the future. Once free he decided to go to America as the representative leader of the Irish people, both to raise money for a National Loan and voice the Irish cause, and, if possible, through the medium of American politics to influence American statesmen on behalf of Ireland's claims. He hoped, in other words, to bring Ireland for the first time into the arena of international politics, and who will deny that it was at least a marvellous gamble?

THE ESCAPE FROM LINCOLN.

It was not, then, of himself he was thinking as one morning he fingered the keys of the prison chaplain, where he saw them lying on a press in the sacristy. There was, the prisoners knew, a peculiar gate in one of the walls of the prison which seemed to give egress to the world outside. Perhaps one of these keys would fit that gate to freedom! It was the work of a few moments as he lit the candles for Mass to collect in his palm some of the warm wax and to press the key into it. Now the problem was to get the impression out and a *facsimile* key in. Sean Milroy, who happened to be in Lincoln with De Valera, drew a humorous postcard headed *Christmas 1917*

—*Christmas 1918*, showing on one side a drunken man trying to find the key-hole of his hall door, and on the other a prisoner struggling with an enormous key at a prison gate; the happy drunk was muttering, "I can't get in," and the unhappy prisoner was wailing, "I can't get out." This card they boldly sent out under the eyes of the Governor, who merely smiled at the joke it contained. After several vicissitudes it finally found its way to Michael Collins, and after two unsuccessful attempts had been made with keys smuggled into the jail, a third key, this time unfinished, was baked in a cake with a file, and safely reached the imprisoned men. With these Alderman De Loughrey, another of the prisoners, fashioned a skeleton key, and almost two months after the original plan had been mooted a night was fixed for the escape. For almost six weeks before Frank Kelly, sent by Michael Collins, had been laying plans in Lincoln, spying out the ground and making certain that the gate in question did actually open on a free world. On the chosen night Kelly, Collins, Harry Boland, and Pat O'Donoghue, of Manchester, were ready waiting in Lincoln with a car. Leaving O'Donoghue, the other three stole across the fields at the rear of the prison as soon as dark was fallen, and, lying within sight of the prison windows, waited for the appointed hour. At the stroke of the hour they flashed with a torch, and high up in the jail a faint light flickered in response. Rising, they

raced swiftly to the gate, then actually seen at close quarters for the first time, only to find that it was a double gate. Collins had a duplicate key, and thrust it in the lock. He turned it. It held firm. He struggled with it, and to his horror it snapped off short, one piece remaining in his fist, the other clogging the keyhole.

THE BROKEN KEY.

At the some moment De Valera, with two comrades, Sean McGarry and Sean Milroy, stole down the corridor from their cell and across the prison yards to the gate. The skeleton key fitted, and De Valera swung open the inner door. Parted by the outer gate, the free men and the prisoners looked at one another, Collins's bulky shape outlined against the sky, De Valera's lanky form against the prison buildings. "I've broken a key in the lock, Dev.," Collins almost sobbed. De Valera, with a cry, thrust his own key in from the opposite side, and, by one of those chances of fortune that do not always favour the brave, he managed to eject the stub of Collins's key. Again the skeleton worked. The outer gate swung open. They were free!

The remainder of Collins's arrangements worked like clockwork. Their hearts leaped once again when they came on a party of soldiers in the fields, but Boland's salutation disarmed suspicion, and they reached the waiting car in safety. At once they set off by a relay of cars to cross

England before the hue-and-cry should be on their track. From Lincoln to Newark, Newark to Sheffield, Sheffield to Manchester they sped on, while the dawn rose behind them in the sky. And once in Manchester De Valera was fairly safe. Collins had perfected a system of transport for arms and men between Liverpool and Dublin, mainly through an I.R.B. man in the Cunard Company, and when the time came, a few weeks later, it was a comparatively easy matter to smuggle De Valera to Ireland.

The excitement caused in Ireland by De Valera's escape^{*} cannot be described. A huge Sinn Fein demonstration in the Mansion House clamoured for news of him, and of course there was no message. De Valera is just the kind of man who would not think of anything so spectacular. Boland and Collins were back, and present at the meeting, and while the audience howled for a message, they looked at one another in dismay. "Good God!" said Harry Boland, "what shall we do?" The next minute Collins emerged from an ante-room and held a letter aloft in his hand. It was to become an historic message. "I have escaped from Lincoln Prison to do the country's work, and I am doing it.—Eamon De Valera." The audience yelled and cheered with delight and demanded the paper, but Collins slipped it to a girl secretary. He had written it himself!

From that day on De Valera was scarcely ever

seen in the open in Ireland until the Truce of 1921. Foreign journalists saw him in secret, led blindfolded through the night to where he worked in secret. He became a man of mystery. And as romance gathered about his name, the love and admiration of the people grew until it knew no bounds.

LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE.

He was now elected, in April of 1918, President of Dáil Eireann—the first Irish House of Representatives since the Act of Union—and Ireland, beginning gradually to learn the full extent of the meaning of the policy of Self-Reliance, was turning to him for guidance in the practical business of national reconstruction. That same April, as if to emphasise the challenge thus laid down to British rule, the first barrack in Ireland was attacked and taken at Araglen by Volunteers under the command of Michael Fitzgerald. The Dáil declared itself the *de jure* Parliament of Ireland, and set about making itself, as far as was physically possible, the *de facto* Government. Such a contest had probably never before been heard of in history—a rivalry for government between a handful of “wanted” men and the greatest Empire of the world. And at the head of that handful an escaped felon! It sounds impossible even now, and to many then it sounded farcical and ludicrous. But time has shown which won!

Having satisfied himself that the Irish front was ready for the coming fight, De Valera went secretly to Liverpool at the end of May, and, disguised as a sailor, was smuggled aboard a trans-Atlantic liner. The next thing the world heard of him was that he had landed in New York toward the middle of June, ready for a new struggle on American soil.

CHAPTER III.

*"Oh! rough the rude Atlantic, the thunderous,
the wide,
Whose kiss is like a soldier's kiss that will not
be denied,
The whole night long we dream of you, and
waking, think we're there—
Vain dream and foolish waking, we never shall
see Clare!"*

—Emily Lawless.

AMONGST THE IRISH EXILES.

The history of the Irish struggle during 1919 and 1920 is divided between Ireland and America, and the honours are to be shared equally. At home things got hotter and hotter, and gradually the country found itself living in the midst of a frightful guerilla warfare, waged in the streets of its cities and towns, out on the hills, along the country roads, until every day became an adventure, and murder and horror walked hand-in-hand by night. In America, from June 1919 to December 1920, De Valera was rousing the millions of Irish exiles in support of the struggle at home, travelling America from coast to coast, addressing vast and enthusiastic audiences, col-

lecting money to finance the struggle, awakening the entire country to the injustice of Ireland's position, and attempting to lever American public and political opinion against British imperialism. In those eighteen months he cannot have travelled an inch less than ten thousand miles, and may have travelled much more. It has been said by those who observed him that he showed himself a man of immense energy, and that he can at no time during that exhausting period have worked less than sixteen hours a day. This physical energy and endurance of De Valera is something without which he could never have endured all the exacting and varied duties that continued to fall upon his shoulders from this day forward, for it is literally true that from the night he escaped from Lincoln Jail he only rested when he was back in jail again. I have said that he is tall and spare as a spear : he is also as tough as one. Collins's energy, also inexhaustible, was whirlwind. De Valera's is insistent, penetrating, implacable, prevailing.

THE TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA.

The American tour was De Valera's first real introduction to the world of international politics. It was his first real test as a statesman, and if he had tried he could not have chosen a more cruel one. Hard and, in the main, unjust words have been spoken of his work in the States during those eighteen months. Perhaps it is as well,

therefore, to consider the superhuman nature of the task that met him when he first changed out of his disguise in New York and drove to his suite in the Waldorf Astoria to begin his campaign.

AMERICAN PROGRAMME.

He had three main objects in view. He was in New York as the acknowledged representative of the Irish people at home appealing to the Irish race abroad. He went there, that is to say, as a publicist and a propagandist. He appealed to the exiled Irish for financial support for the struggle being waged at home. And he hoped to use the Irish vote in American politics to obtain official American recognition for the Irish Republic, declared in 1916 and supported by the elections of 1918 and the first Dáil of 1919, of which he had been elected President. Of these the last was without doubt the most ambitious scheme, and the most difficult, and it was from the first foredoomed to failure. It meant, in fact, that he was gambling on the hope of throwing the entire weight of America, in one of the most crucial periods in the history of international politics, against the power and influence of the British Empire, and not against the British Empire alone, but against its Allies, and, even later, against the avowed policy of the League of Nations, who must inevitably support its members against the efforts of any external country to alter its territorial boundaries. What a task for any one man

to undertake! And this amongst all the network maze of internal American politics! What an ambition for a man who but a little under three years ago was teaching boys and girls in Dublin colleges to do sums, and was at the very moment in which he launched his campaign an escaped convict from an English prison!

It may be said at once that, as far as his first two objects were concerned, propaganda and finance, his tour and labours in America were a complete and even spectacular success. In the nature of the case it would have been amazing if he achieved anything but a partial success in the third, and that he achieved even that should in all justice be regarded as a personal tribute to his own abilities.

It must never be forgotten when attempting to assess the qualities of this man that he has always been—to borrow a word from the later history of Irish revolutionary politics—an Irregular. He has always been a patron of Hard and what at times looked like Lost Causes. He cannot be judged as one would judge the ordinary politician or statesman, whose work moves along established lines, and with the benison, if not of his opponents, at least of convention. The regular politician would fly in dismay from the tasks he has undertaken, and it is safe to say that this particular task of his American campaign was one which no statesman of to-day would dare attempt. It was a task for a revolutionary leader, immense even

for such, and as such he undertook it, whether he was to succeed or fail. The hardest thing that one may say is that ~~he~~ he was unwise to have even attempted it.

Already in 1917 Dr. McCartan had gone to America as an envoy from the Irish at home, and in 1918 Diarmuid Lynch had been appointed Secretary of the American organisation called the Friends of Irish Freedom founded in 1916, while in February, a few weeks after De Valera's escape from Lincoln, a great Irish Race Convention was held in Philadelphia (*a*) to urge Ireland's right to be represented at the Peace Conference, (*b*) to send delegates to observe and report on Irish conditions, and (*c*) to inaugurate a fund in support of the Irish cause. By the time De Valera had arrived at New York the Germans had signed the Treaty, but, as President Wilson sadly confessed to the Irish delegates at Versailles, "I came here with very high hopes of carrying out the principles as they were laid down—there was a lot I hoped for and did not get."

So De Valera closed the Fund opened by the Philadelphia Convention at over one million dollars, and launched the External National Loan for five times that amount, while at home the Dáil had sanctioned the immediate issue of a Loan of £250,000. It might be said here that in other ways America subscribed, through such organisations as the Irish Volunteers' Dependents' Fund, the National Aid Association, and the White

Cross, probably not much under another five million dollars.

It was now his great hope, destined not to be fulfilled, to induce either or both of the two great parties, Republican and Democrat, to adopt as a "plank" in their election programme a resolution in favour of the recognition of the Irish Republic. In his attempt to do this he found that the national loyalties of the American-Irish and the intricacies of Presidential politics would only allow of a resolution of sympathy with the Irish cause. He rejected it. Let those who think they could have done better criticise him. Inevitably Irish-American opinion split, and if any conclusion may be drawn from the results of this part of his campaign they must lead only to the opinion that, powerful as the Irish vote is in the United States, it must always be regarded, and very rightly so, by Irishmen at home as an American vote first and an Irish one after.

ACCLAIMED BY IRELAND'S EXILES.

The reception given him in America astounded even Americans, who are accustomed to spectacular and immense gatherings, and was a testimony not only to him as a man, but to the inherent appeal in the cause of Irish liberty. When De Valera, as a man of 1916, stood before the wildly cheering crowds of rarely less than a hundred thousand people, poor and rich, lettered and unlettered, Irish of the first to the tenth

generation—a crowd mad with a frenzy of enthusiasm, yelling, weeping in their emotion, crying out his name and the name of Ireland, waving American and Sinn Fein flags, cheering afresh at every attempt he made to address them, so that it often happened that he would have to stand for a full fifteen or twenty minutes looking down over an excited sea of faces, listening to the thunder of their cries, there met in such gatherings three hundred years of bitter and fond, wild and unhappy memories. All the pent-up and long-starved love and hate of the exile broke out in such a meeting; the generations shook hands across centuries of time; this man was not merely De Valera, the man who had stood in the barricades while the English guns thundered about him and the Irish flag fluttered over his head, but he was their Tone, their Emmet, their O'Connell, their Parnell—their ideal leader of a mighty if banished race. Little wonder they poured their money at his feet, from the man whom six generations of exile had raised to the first rank in the judiciary or in commerce to the boy or girl whose eyes were still wet with the tears of farewell, and in whose minds the homely picture of the farm they would never see again had not yet faded.

THE HOME FRONT.

And, while all this was grievously perturbing the British Foreign Office, at home the fight was

growing more and more intense. The Irish Bishops' statement, issued from Maynooth as early as the autumn of 1920, still serves to sum up what had been happening in the meantime in Ireland :—

“ On a scale truly appalling have to be reckoned countless indiscriminate raids and arrests in the darkness of night, prolonged imprisonments without trial, savage sentences from tribunals that command and deserve no confidence, the burning of houses, town halls, factories, creameries and crops, the destruction of industries to pave the way for want and famine—by men maddened by drink and bent on loot—the flogging and massacre of civilians, all perpetrated by the forces of the Crown, who have established a reign of frightfulness which, for murdering the innocent and destroying their property, has a parallel only in the horrors of Turkish atrocities or in the outrages of the Red Army in Bolshevik Russia.”

What had happened, simply, was that by August 1919 the Volunteers had come under the Dáil, as represented by the Minister for Defence, and had, with the full approval and by the command of G.H.Q., opened a species of guerilla warfare on the Crown forces, and these replied with the savageries of the Black and Tans. Attacks on R.I.C. barracks became more and more frequent, raids for arms, ambushes on a small or large scale. Lord French was ambushed, but escaped under a hail of bullets, at Ashtown towards the

end of 1919. In January 1920 the Black and Tans were already being organised in Great Britain; and by February the most nerve-wracking feature of the Terror came into being—namely, the Curfew law. At first from midnight, then from ten o'clock, and in some places, like Cork City, at one stage from as early as five o'clock in the afternoon, every living soul was required to be within doors, and as soon as darkness descended the civilian population became entirely at the mercy of the military and police. The nights became horrible with rifle-fire and the slow, ominous tramp of marching men. No man knew when those heavy steps might not halt at his door, and then——! His wife or his children might next hear the crash of revolver bullets and the screams of a dying man. In March the Lord Mayor of Cork was murdered at one o'clock in the morning in the presence of his wife by armed police with blackened faces. On the other hand, Alan Bell, who was attempting to smash the National Loan, was taken from a tram at Ballsbridge, in Dublin, and shot in the open street. In April over three hundred evacuated R.I.C. blockhouses were destroyed by fire in a single night, and almost every Income Tax Office in the country was either raided and put out of action or burned to the ground. By the summer the English recruits to the R.I.C., for ever after to be known as the Black and Tans, were to be seen about the country, and began, in the words

of their own official paper, to make Ireland "an appropriate hell for rebels." On August 12th Terence MacSwiney was arrested, and began his terrible hunger-strike of seventy-five days, an example of courage and endurance to the death that roused the entire world. On the Sunday of the 21st of November fourteen British intelligence officers were shot dead in various parts of Dublin, and the same afternoon, by way of reprisal, Auxiliaries fired on a crowd of men, women and children at Croke Park, wounding sixty and killing fourteen outright. These are but a handful of hundreds of dreadful occurrences which horrified the world during that summer and autumn, but they serve to indicate the state of affairs in Ireland in December 1920, when De Valera, having completed his work, returned to take his share in the fierce battle waging at home.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GUERILLA WAR.

FROM December 1920 to the beginning of the Truce in July 1921 Ireland was truly gorged with horror. In those eight months the Reign of Terror reached its peak. Even now, nearly twelve years after the close of that terrible period, there must be many in Ireland to whom the sound of a shot at night brings back in a sudden rush of fear all the tense, nervous atmosphere of that time. Even to-day a footfall on the pavement or a Guard testing the lock upon the door can be sufficient to evoke a picture of a city so quiet and silent that it might be deserted, the streets in utter darkness—for not even the street lamps could be lit on account of early Curfew—and then on the window a sudden blaze as a silent Lancia car pours its powerful searchlight along the face of the houses, seeking in every doorway and alley for the crouching figure of a "gunman"; and then, in the distance, breaking the awful silence, the roar of a machine-gun and the crash of exploding bombs. For the British troops were on edge, their nerves ragged from long confinement to barracks, and the constant peril in which they moved.

No better idea of the peculiar nature of that warfare, or of the conditions of life in Ireland for two long years, between the summer of 1919 and the Truce, can possibly be given than by saying that neither for the military nor the police, the civil population nor the revolutionaries, was there a single moment, day or night, or a single place in which they were not, every one of them, at the mercy of the chance of the moment. At any second this strange, sporadic, murderous conflict might jet up in a crackle of firing that would last for anything from a minute to a night. No sound became so familiar or so ominous as the roaring engine of military or police lorries, tearing through the streets like fire-engines, every rifle at the ready, every black muzzle pointed at the passing crowds on the footpaths. For by 1921 street ambushes became common—one of the most trying features of the fight as far as the civil populace was concerned. At any moment one of these lorries, or a group of Auxiliaries, or of plain-clothes detectives, or of those spies and "spots" with whom the cities swarmed, might be attacked in the crowded street. A young man gazing into a shop window would fumble with something between his hands, and then, whirling around suddenly, would hurl a Mills bomb at the passing lorry, while across the street or a few yards from him one or two more would whip out their automatics or their long-nosed Webleys and work their trigger-fingers feverishly for five seconds,

then dashing for cover down side-alleys or side-streets, trusting to the confusion or their intimate knowledge of the city to get safely away. It was only after long consideration, and under the pressure of circumstances, that this form of street fighting was sanctioned by Headquarters. When Macready took over command in April 1920 there were only two divisions, or some 20,000 military in Ireland. By August he had the strength of four divisions, or 46 battalions; by December 51 battalions and six cavalry regiments, and a little later 104 armoured cars, Peerless or Rolls Royce, innumerable lorries and lighter cars for city and country patrol work. In addition there were Auxiliaries, Black and Tans, regular R.I.C., with official and unofficial C.I.D. men, spies, *agents provocateurs*, and all the other various Government agents, that must have brought the forces of the Crown to at least 50,000 men. Against these, who literally swarmed in the streets of Dublin, so much so that one could not walk from one end of Dame Street or Grafton Street to the other without rubbing shoulders with scores of them at any hour of the day, there were in Dublin at no time more than eighty full-time men, counting together the "Squad"—the small band attached to Collins's Intelligence Department, and the A.S.U. (Active Service Unit), who were chosen men of the Dublin Brigade. The military and police and detectives had become, with their increasing numbers, far more active and astute

and daring as the fight wore into the beginning of '21, and foot patrols in long lines would comb through the city, block by block, or areas would be enclosed by barbed wire for detailed searching, and these swarms in the centre would hold up and search passers-by on the slightest suspicion. The enemy had to be rooted out, and so these street attacks became inevitable, and so danger lurked at every corner, and no place and no time became safe—for anybody.

Partial martial law was in force in the South of Ireland from December 1920. Official reprisals by the military were sanctioned, and became frequent, *i.e.* the blowing up of houses belonging to sympathisers of the I.R.A. Drives by military and cavalry across whole stretches of countryside were initiated. Drumhead courtmartial were inaugurated for men taken under arms, and military executions began to mount up. Roads were being trenched to hinder military transport, trees felled across them, bridges blown up, barracks attacked, the homes of loyalists burned; and the fight even spread to England, when warehouses in Liverpool and Birkenhead were burnt and plans were actually perfected to destroy the shipping in the Mersey and blow up the electric plant of the City of Manchester. Meanwhile the Black and Tan and Auxiliary outrages piled up the horror. The greater part of the business district of Cork City had been reduced to ashes on the night of December 11th 1920 by Crown forces, who had

clearly got completely out of hand and turned brigands. As brigands they acted from that time on. In March 1921 they repeated in Limerick the horror of the shooting of Lord Mayor MacCurtain in Cork, when, on the night of March 7th, they murdered the Mayor and ex-Mayor of Limerick in the presence of their wives. It would be impossible to list all the terrible occurrences of those last eight months of the Anglo-Irish War, but there is scarcely a home in Ireland at the present day which could not tell a half-dozen incidents of the terror that surrounded it night and day.

DE VALERA IN HIDING.

Nor is it possible to describe the strain under which De Valera and his comrades worked during this period. Imagine a gaunt old Georgian house, one of those with which Dublin was filled during the eighteenth century, situated in a semi-fashionable quarter not a hundred yards from Merrion Square. On either side the houses of respected professional men or Government officials, at least one of them blissfully unaware that on the other side of the wall, facing him where he sat before his fireplace, was the most badly wanted man in the British Isles. There were times when, as a military patrol tramped slowly down Mount Street, De Valera's shadow could easily have fallen upon the blind, and it happened at least once that when a patrol, in the course of one of those routine, mechanical and rather perfunctory raids

that were the order of the night at that time, entered that house, the raiders walked over the secret hiding-place where De Valera crouched, not daring to breathe until they should have gone. On rare occasions a foreign journalist, having been driven blindfolded in a closed car about Dublin for half an hour, would be led by the hand to the doorway. A peculiar knock or ring, and he would enter the dark and rather gloomy hallway. Then he would enter one of the finely proportioned rooms which are the great attractions of these old houses, and there in a corner, or huddled over the fire, he would see, his hands full of papers, his face pale from his long incarceration, ceaseless work and untold responsibility and worry, the man of whom it is no exaggeration to say that at the time all England was howling for his blood, and all Ireland aching for the chance to die for him. Here, while the fighting men carried on outside the work he began in 1916, he had to try to keep a cool, consistent head, to supervise and attempt to co-ordinate, as head of the Cabinet, the work of the various departments of Dáil Eireann, especially the work of its representatives abroad; and, at home, of the courts, propaganda and finance—and all this, or almost all, by means of despatch and courier, only rarely daring to leave his hiding-place, and then always for government reasons only, and never for any such trifling cause as exercise or a breath of air. Nobody who has not experienced working under these nerve-

racking conditions can imagine the strain of such a life. There is an old Italian motto which might be written over the door of such a house—*Cor ne edito*, Eat not thy heart! Nothing but his marvellous constitution, which, however, it might be added, is already showing the marks of a strenuous and abnormal life, could have sustained such an existence, and nothing but an iron will could have carried him through and out of so long a conflict with his principles unshaken and his convictions firm as steel. Not merely did he urge on the constructive work of Sinn Fein—especially the Arbitration Courts which gradually usurped the position of the British Law Courts, and the work of the Propaganda Department, which was, next to the I.R.A., the most efficient, powerful and hated weapon of Sinn Fein against the British—but it was also his duty, from the day he returned from the United States, to watch the peace feelers which the British were sending out from April 1920. If there is one British thing the Irish have always learned to fear, and with good reason, it is British diplomacy, and it would be difficult to exaggerate, therefore, the satisfaction it gave the revolutionaries through all these peace moves to feel that they had at their head a leader in whose iron will and rooted convictions they could place absolute trust. It steadied the army, and it steadied the people during that most difficult period of the early summer of 1921.

PEACE "FEELERS."

These peace efforts had begun to be earnest from January, when Archbishop Clune, of Perth, Australia, saw Griffith and Collins on behalf of Mr. Lloyd George, but nothing had come of them, and it was clear that the British Prime Minister was only manœuvring for position. In April Lord Derby arrived, and was led, by the I.R.A., to meet De Valera. General Smuts and, later, Sir James Craig followed, but neither of these political scouts said or did anything which led De Valera to take them seriously. Mr. Arthur Cope, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Castle, was the last of these envoys, but he was also the first serious one. He was a firm believer in self-government for Ireland, and from May 1921, when Mr. Lloyd George seems first to have made up his mind to recognise the power of Sinn Fein and call a conference with it, he worked tirelessly to bring about an ending to the bitter relations that had for so many hundreds of years existed between the two islands. Matters were, however, moving with their customary slowness in these fields of peace, as if by way of contrast with the horrible swiftness of events in the field of war. Perhaps it may be well to record here that the last great event which occurred during the Anglo-Irish struggle was the destruction of the Dublin Custom House, which contained, among other offices, those of Inland Revenue and Customs, and whose collapse in fire and smoke was for many the

symbol of the fall of English civil administration in Ireland. In the operation six men were killed, twelve wounded, and seventy captured.

THE TRUCE.

Yet, in spite of these various prologues to peace, the end came with startling suddenness. De Valera was in the garden of a house in Blackrock when a foot-patrol casually entered and came on him. They did not recognise him, strange to say, but they found suspicious papers on him, and more in the house, where his secretary was at work, and they took him to Dublin Castle, where he was recognised. To his dismay, they released him, and quite openly the man for whom everybody had been searching took a train from Westland Row to Greystones—surely a dozen people must have recognised him and gasped—and, to the astonishment of his family, walked in home the evening after his arrest. He felt that this strange release was an effort to discredit him in the eyes of the people and his followers, and for the whole of the following day he was too troubled to work. But meanwhile Mr. Lloyd George's invitation to a conference was on its way, and on the 24th a courier drove up to the door of his house in Greystones and handed him the letter, heavy with seals.

Within a week he had met the chief members of the Southern Unionist *bloc*. He asked for and was granted the release of his colleagues who

were in jail, and with them met General Macready on July 8th, to arrange terms for a truce. These were duly arrived at, and fixed to come into force on July 11th 1921 at twelve midday. Up to the last hour the I.R.A. kept up the offensive, and then silence and quietness fell on the country. Curfew was lifted, and people could walk abroad once more. They breathed a sigh of relief, devoutly hoping that in that sigh they wafted for ever the Anglo-Irish struggle into the realms of history. As events have proved, they do not appear to have sighed hard enough.

The fight was not ended—it was merely postponed.

PART THREE.

FROM 1921 TO THE PRESENT DAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CIVIL WAR.

THERE can be no Irish biographer of De Valera who would not wish to pass over the period of the Civil War—not, one hastens to add, because there can be recorded a single action of his during those years of which any man could possibly be ashamed, but because that period of internecine strife, horrible for anybody, was for him a period of complete despair.

For the portion of De Valera's life on which we now enter is the tragic act of the drama of his life. It is a drama within a drama, a doubly sorrowful story, the descent into the inferno. In this period he must have felt the appropriateness of Dante's image in which he compares life to a dark wood, for he was to drink to the full the cup of disappointment and see all his dreams tumble about him like a house of cards.

First of all, some pictures of that period recur to the mind, and may be suggested here so as to recall the atmosphere of the period.

From July 14th to September 30th 1921 De Valera was duelling with Lloyd George, manœuvring for position against one of the wildest

statesmen in Europe. It was a terrible year of work and worry for him, and he knew that he was fighting now what might be the last round of the fight of centuries. Behind his back he felt the generations of Irish dead who had died in the belief that their country had always been and would always be a sovereign State. It was a position he could not surrender to any British statesman. Behind the English Prime Minister, on the other hand, were the generations of imperial conquerors—the Mountjoys, the Carews, the Grey de Wiltons, all the darlings of Elizabeth, the Celt-tamers, from Cromwell to royal William, from Lake and Monroe to Castlereagh and Carson. The English Minister argued geographical propinquity and historical precedent against the idea of the sovereignty of Ireland, and he refused to continue any negotiation with De Valera if it were insisted on as a preliminary. Finally, after fourteen or fifteen despatches and telegrams had passed, in which both sides stated and re-stated their positions in terms of: "We cannot admit you are a sovereign state," on the one hand, and on the other hand: "We cannot meet you except as a sovereign state," Lloyd George repeated his original invitation in terms of, "We have stated our position," and De Valera accepted in terms of, "We have also stated *our* position." I think it will have to be confessed that both sides showed a keen desire to meet without prejudice to their claims, and De Valera was sufficiently ingenious in manag-

ing it without prejudicing his. Yet he was almost in despair that any result would ever be achieved, and when one of those notes was brought to him one night he leaned his face on his hands and groaned, "I fear we shall never arrive at a settlement with such a man as this!"

And then I recollect, too, the night of December 6th, when news of the Treaty was wired to Dublin, and Eamonn Duggan came across with the document. De Valera was to open a big Aonach or Fair of Irish goods at the Mansion House that evening, and, I believe, later to go to a Dante centenary celebration. He had the slip of paper in his hand when he staggered on the platform, his face frozen with horror and surprise. His voice was gone. Twice he tried to speak and failed, and then he whispered, "You will forgive me—I cannot make a speech . . . I have . . . had . . . bad . . . news," and then he limped from the stage.

YET ANOTHER MEMORY.

On the morning of the closing of the Four Courts the Republican sheets were going to press, while not a hundred yards away down on the Quays the guns were vomiting shrapnel at the Irregular positions. Childers rushed around to De Valera for a message on this new and terrible situation. "What shall we do? We must attack them." De Valera paused. Then he said quickly, "No! No! No! Don't say a word. I'll settle it,

I'll settle it." Thinking, as always, of peace and unity, he may in that moment have gone too far in his efforts to conciliate Rory O'Connor. He confessed almost as much later, and afterwards he had to bear the blame and brunt for Rory O'Connor's action in hastening, if not originating, that awful conflict.

Long after that fateful 4 a.m. of June 27th 1922, when the bombardment of the Four Courts began, the blame of the Civil War has been unjustly thrown on De Valera, and since, as the leader of the people, he takes the glory of the fight against the British from 1916 onward, it may be supposed that he can carry the blame for 1922 also. It is the common lot of leaders. But in his case it is most cruelly unjust to blame him for the events of 1922. He was not then the leader of the people, but the leader of a minority, *and a political minority at that*. Over the militarists he had no control, and they avoided or rejected his influence, so that when he issued his Cease Fire Order in May 1923 he only did so because the chastened militarists were only too glad to accept his control that they once rejected, and to accept his magnanimous offer to try to pull together the scattered remnants of Republicanism in Ireland. There is not another man in Ireland who would have so unselfishly taken up the Lost Cause, with all its opprobrium and all its associations of defeat. But this man would go, and has gone, to almost any length to bring about the unity of his people,

so woefully divided in the hour of apparent triumph.

It will be said now that I am writing as an apologist of De Valera, and I do not deny it. Heaven knows, the man needs an apologist—he has had his share of critics and even detractors, and his opponents have had their share of apologists and eulogists. But one does not need to spend many words over the matter. At one period Ireland heard the bitter cry almost daily, “He began the Civil War.” It suffices to answer, “If so, where and when did he begin it?” If the cry were, “Why did he not stay the Civil War?” it might be a different thing, but that is a question never asked. Nor is it a question that should, in all fairness, be asked. He was a leader whose followers threw him over at a moment when few had ears for sane counsels, and the country was almost mad with passion. A smaller man would have thrown up his hands and retired in despair to private life. A man with a weaker love for his country would have abandoned her cause for ever—a man weak with human respect and fear of public opinion. But this man is neither small nor weak nor cowardly. Whatever faults he has, he has not these. If his followers would not be loyal to him, he decided to be loyal to his followers. I am prepared to meet his detractors by saying that it was magnanimous to the point of folly. But whether or not he was wrong history and time alone can tell.

I have spoken of the period as the tragic drama of his life, and as a drama its events may be recorded.

The first act extends from July 14 1921, when he meets the English Prime Minister for the first time, the good wishes of all Ireland thick upon him, the eyes of the world watching the protracted duel with one of the ablest of British statesmen, to the December 9th when he issued his manifesto to the people of Ireland calling on them to reject the proffered Treaty. The first curtain falls dramatically on a scene of the highest tension.

In the second act he, the acknowledged leader of his race, is deposed, after months of argument in the Dáil, from his position as President and leader. This is the period from December 14th 1921, when the Dáil met to discuss the Treaty, through January 7th, when they agreed by a majority to accept it. On January 9th Arthur Griffith was elected President. The General Election of May ratified that vote, and then in June and July the "Irregular" I.R.A. defied the Army of the young Free State. That briefly, but accurately, sums up the events of this period. We may place the end of this act in July, when the Headquarter forces of the I.R.A., after Blessington, were scattered, and began a guerilla war that carries us with an increasing burden of tragedy into a climactic third act, in which Arthur Griffith dies and Michael Collins is killed. In this act the whole miserable

and unhappy story of the Civil War lumbers its way across the bloody stage of Ireland like some foul dragon that has come as a curse to the land. What, in these months, must have been the thoughts of De Valera, on whose shoulders all the blame was being thrown! No public man, least of all a national leader, could watch this spectacle without dismay, but he, above all, whose one abiding dream has always been the unity of his country, from North to South, watched it with agony. Uneasily, but inevitably, he took up what cannot be described as other than an unsatisfactory position on the side of his mutineers. Nobody, least of all he, would question, then or now, the excellence of their principles and the nobility of their ideals. But he did not desire war. Indeed, he uttered more than one solemn warning of the impending danger. What other action he would have advised we do not yet know. His counsels did not prevail, and they have not so far been made public.

This act may well end in December 1922, on the afternoon of the seventeenth, when, after seven hundred and fifty years of military rule, two slate-grey destroyers sail into the dusk out of Dublin Bay with (almost, but not quite) the last of the British Army of occupation in the South. By that date the Civil War was virtually at an end, but it is the melancholy duty of De Valera, in this fourth act of our tragedy, to issue, in May 1923, a Cease Fire order to a disbanded

and defeated army, which has long since ceased firing of its own accord, and is by now little more than a hunted rabble. 'He must have faced with almost satisfaction the prospect of jail when, in August of this year, he appeared in public in Ennis and was duly arrested there and put into Kilmainham for the better part of a year. I do not think there is any portion of this history of the life of De Valera so profoundly tragic as the last act of this drama within a drama. His army—if it could in any sense of the word be referred to his control at this time—is in the internment camps and the jails. It is not within the province of this brief Life to depict the conditions under which it existed there, but it may be said that he fully understood and appreciated the circumstances, and Peadar O'Donnell, in his marvellous book, *The Gates Flew Open*, has left an unforgettable picture of those days and scenes. The future holds nothing for him. He spends his days reading Einstein to drive away thoughts of black despair, or plays handball with young Free State officers, into whose minds at that time one would give a great deal to be able to see. As the winter approaches the last remnants of the scattered I.R.A. are picked up, one by one, from their hiding-places in the towns and cities, or in the holes and crannies of the mountains. In the crowded jails a fermentation arises, supported outside by a handful of what one might almost call girls and boys. His men go on a hunger

strike' in every jail and camp in Ireland, until at one time there must have been five thousand men starving to death. And all the time he sits there in his cell, knowing that the blame of all this sorrow, and all these deaths, that almost—so far has the iron entered into the soul of Ireland—are less than sorrow, will be flung ponderous on his back, to bear as long as he lives. Will he, too, go on hunger strike? Had he done so, there can be no doubt that the tragedy would have closed here, finally and for ever. He had what I can only call the consummate courage to refuse. The strike broke. Men rushed for food. It was awful and pitiable. They were released—because it was clear that they had fought their last fight and the weapon had broken in their hands. By January 1924 everything was finished. The prisoners came out of the camps, ragged as tramps, carrying little bundles under their arms as they marched singing through the streets to the trains. The jail gates opened to De Valera. The drama was over, and before Ireland and the world he stood—the leader of a Lost Cause. That was, however, 1924, and this is 1933, and meanwhile a new drama has begun and slowly unfolded itself, life playing its old trick of taking down a new volume when we think the story is at last done.

It was from this time on that his face grew darker with furrowed lines, and the deeper marks of sorrow engraved themselves on his face. On

either side his friends were dying, his old friends and colleagues Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins on the pro-Treaty side, and men like Cathal Brugha and Harry Boland and Erskine Childers on the other. He was a man who never harboured hate or enmity in his heart. He saw only the ruin of his hopes and brave men falling in their hour. The death of Erskine Childers moved him deeply. Childers was the strangest figure in all that drama, and by his end one of the most tragic. He *never* took an active part in the military campaign of 1922, though it was rumoured at the time that he did, and he was even charged with attempting to destroy the Transatlantic Cable Station at Valentia. He was what the Russians call a "fatal" character, and the shadow of his doom seemed to be over him from the first. It was sad to see this highly talented man, the author of books of world-fame, a man who had held positions of trust and honour under the British Government, moving quietly among the Southern I.R.A. officers, who knew nothing of his career or services to Ireland, and completely underestimated his ability. I once heard one of them say, patronisingly, "Childers, you ought to be given some kind of army job. You would make quite a good adjutant." I do not believe that De Valera ever saw him from the day he left Dublin, and his death moved him profoundly. He may have felt that Childers was, to some extent, a guest of Ireland, and that with better luck, and

perhaps more insistence, he might conceivably have saved the life of his friend by keeping him near him.

Such a personal incident helps to explain the tired and drawn face of De Valera to-day—the face, as has been so well said, that recalls the face of Dante—"the man who had descended into hell."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER 1924.

WHEN De Valera was released in 1924 his feelings must have been very like to those of Lee after the Southern defeat in the American Civil War, even as in 1922 he presents a parallel with his historical counterpart, Abraham Lincoln. He set his face against the Civil War as long as ever he could, and it was only after the Four Courts attack that he joined up as an ordinary Volunteer at a post in York Street. By so doing (there can, of course, be no question of it), he, like Lincoln, was *as a leader* sanctioning the spilling of blood in a last hopeless attempt to preserve the extreme ideal under whose banner he has always believed, and believes to this day, his country can alone be unified and kept in a state of domestic peace. Agree or disagree with this policy of unrelenting nationalism, one cannot but admire the tenacious consistency of the man in holding to it even to death. But Lincoln won, and North America has been unified under one flag, and De Valera lost. After 1924 he might well have been forgiven if he had retired for ever from politics and allowed to other men and another generation to take up the task where he left off.

But one of the most astonishing things in the history of 1923 and 1924 was the tenacity of the political side of Irish Republicanism. At a period when the defeated Republicans scarcely expected any support at the polls they found their meetings attended by enormous crowds, and they were able to elect a substantial minority at the elections for the new Dáil Eireann—the Parliament, that is, of the Irish Free State. These Deputies, however, refused to attend the Dail, and it was plain to De Valera that he could not desert, not merely these his faithful followers, but the mass of people whose views they represented. In other words, however he might despond, he could always be consoled by realising that there was plenty of ground of hope on which to build. From 1924 on, therefore, the story of De Valera's life is one of renewed endeavour in one of the most discouraging periods of his career, the story of a fight to recapture the loyalty of his people, the story of his efforts to put the aspirations of his followers on a practical political basis. This was not merely a superhuman task, but, as things stood in 1924, an impossible one, and its inherent difficulties forced him eventually to a break with *Sinn Féin* and the foundation of a new party, namely, *Fianna Fáil*. Sinn Féin continues to exist as the intransigent Anti-Treaty Republican Party, the absolutely consistent "Die-Hards." He realised that an abstentionist political party in 1920 led naturally to a native Parliament; but an abstentionist

party in Ireland in 1924 and the following years led merely to virtual extinction as a party unless, like *Sinn Féin* at the present day, it was willing to fight on with attenuated numbers, holding a Parliament of its own, called the Second Dáil, without powers and without even a legal claim to represent more than a handful of electors. Lesser men than De Valera would in this *impasse* have refused to take the step he did. With immense moral courage he advocated the entry into Dáil Eireann under certain contingencies, and finally, in 1927, broke completely with Sinn Féin and led his party to take their seats in Leinster House. For this again he has been blamed—by the extremists in Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. He has only one reply, Whitman's, that consistency is the bugbear of petty minds.

From this date begins the latter portion of De Valera's career. He had been a soldier. He had been a statesman. He was now to become an active and astute politician. One of his first and most far-seeing actions was to plan for the foundation of a newspaper, an organ that would not merely be nationalist in its outlook, but would give prominence to the ideals and plans of his party.

For this purpose he made several more visits to America between 1927 and 1930, and collected between there and Ireland some £200,000 in shares of from £1 upwards, a bulk of the total being held in his own name as managing director

to ensure the continuity of the policy of the organ, which appeared in 1930 under the name of *The Irish Press*. Meanwhile he fought two General Elections, and in 1932 succeeded in attracting the largest number of votes of any party in the State, the figures being, for first preferences :—

Fianna Fail	...	...	566,469
Cumann na nGaedheal	...	...	449,808
Independent	...	...	125,174
Labour	...	...	98,284
Farmers	...	...	34,421

The wheel of fortune has given few whirls so strange as that which had in 1932 placed Mr. De Valera at the head of the Free State Government, and that in the Dáil founded by a Treaty against which, ten years before, he so passionately protested by word and deed. Once more he was the leader of the country—the President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State. The rest is so recent as to be a matter of common knowledge.

CHAPTER III.

As one looks back over the career of De Valera, who is now fifty years old, and has been before the public since 1916, and been actively engaged in politics, revolutionary or political, for almost twenty years, the first thing that strikes one is the staying-power of the man, his extraordinary tenacity of purpose. He has conceived for himself a vision of the Ireland he would create and which he would wish to see rising out of the ashes of the past before he dies, an ideal so noble that many have thought it extravagant and over-ambitious, but which nobody can think unworthy either of the subject or the man. He has pre-figured a Christian State with an individual culture based on the old traditional Gaelic State, yet modern in so far as it takes everything acceptable to the Christian, *i.e.* Catholic ideal. These are, of course, mere words, and are in the mouths of every political organisation in the Ireland of the day, and require careful elaboration and interpretation in terms of educational schemes and economic policies. But to these De Valera adds with especial stress the idea of absolute self-reliance—the old Sinn Fein doctrine of separatism

in politics carried over into separatism in culture and outlook. He is the absolute nationalist. He believes firmly in his own people. His aim is to give them as much political liberty as possible to develop and build on the nucleus of the old Gaelic-Christian civilisation saved from the wreck of the Irish nation in the seventeenth century. It is the measure of his appeal to his people that he has made these things real and vital to Ireland—things which it would go far to attain and preserve.

The second thing that strikes one about him is that he is at all times striving to be bigger than the moment. De Valera is not a particularly sociable man, although his colleagues in the University of which he is Chancellor find him one of the most charming of men. He keeps very much to himself. He is nothing of a feminist, although his American tours, in which he saw women at all sorts of jobs, did a great deal to relax his views. He neither smokes nor drinks. Not that he is necessarily cold and aloof like Parnell; at a recollection of something his face will light up in a smile in the most winning way. (But, incidentally, it will be noticed that he almost never makes a joke from the platform, and awes a meeting rather than carries it with him by his personality, which, unlike other men, he never throws around.) The effect of all this is that what he loses in humanity he gains in detachment, and the emotions of the moment do

not catch him as they do other men. He can rise above the passions of the moment more quickly than almost any other living Irishman, and revert to his inherent and acquired convictions. This lends an extraordinary consistency to all his acts, and has an obvious effect on his followers, who, as with all followers, rejoice in feeling that they know and can trust their leader. This aloofness also gives him power over his people. The Irish are a most emotional race, and respect a man who can control himself and them, a fact which accounts for Parnell's amazing influence, and equally amazing fall; the people could not, and would not, follow a giant with feet of clay.

But out of this detachment and aloofness comes a third quality in De Valera which has at all times been recognised, and which even the most ardent of his followers will not deny. It may be referred to as a tendency to being "doctrinaire" in his ideas and his actions. Collins could take things in a broad loose way for their general value and purport. Griffith, too, would take them for their essential worth, and he would not trouble greatly about details. De Valera has a passion for detail, and reduces too much to a formula, often a very abstract formula indeed. It is the fault of his great qualities of detachment and consistency. If it is a weakness, his opponents have tended to make a vice out of it. He is not unaware of it himself, and he has been known to turn to an interlocutor or colleague with a little

wan smile of apology and say, "You will bear with me, won't you? You know I am an old schoolmaster." Yet, as his career shows, he is not one of those petty minds to whom consistency is a bugbear. His entry into the Dáil in 1927 was inconsistent in many ways with his former position, but had he not done so he would have sounded the death-knell of his party, and there would be in the Ireland of to-day none but extremist, or underground Republicans. He has turned, or is trying to turn, militarist Republicanism into constitutional Republicanism, and for that Ireland may be profoundly thankful to him.

In his home life he is an ordinary simple man, interested in the career of his children, interested in his books, interested in making his own home a picture in little of the State he would like to see rising about him in the Ireland of his political or public life. One of the pictures that keeps reverting to my mind as I have been writing this Life is of Michael Collins playing on the carpet in De Valera's house with his little sons, while De Valera in some cold, formal, unhomely, gilded hall of the old Waldorf-Astoria in New York is thinking fondly of that house by the sea at Greystones, hearing over the chatter of fashionable American ladies of fashion and the nasal cacophony of a jazz-band the waves moaning with their double note of rise and fall on the beach at Greystones, and seeing the light shining in his windows, and the homely, simple, warm domestic scene from

which he was thousands of miles away. During that period, one of the worst periods of the guerilla war, when there was a price on his head, it is more than pleasant, if in view of subsequent events a little melancholy, too, to recall that Collins never let many days pass by without going out to Greystones to see these children, and would very frequently add a little postscript to some often acrimonious, or at least tactfully censorious, letter to say that the kiddies were all right and his wife doing well. But this is to talk of De Valera as a man; and a leader of a people in such a country as Ireland must sacrifice all that human side to his country, as De Valera has sacrificed it for many years now, only snatching from the turmoil of public affairs in odd moments the little joys of life that are everything to the rest of us.

He has given of his best to Ireland. With that, whether the reader of this book be a friend or an opponent, all will, I think, agree.

